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## A DEMOCRATIC PHILOSOPHER AND HIS WORK.

THOMAS DAVIDSON. \* Born Oct. 25, 1840. Died Sept. 14, 1900.

ON the 14th of September last there died at Montreal a wise and good man whose work and influence were out of all proportion to his general reputation. A writer in the London *Spectator* recently declared that at the time of his death Thomas Davidson was one of the twelve most learned men in the world. How that may be I do not know. Certain it is that his profound and varied learning, his portentous memory, his skill in using all languages, and his familiarity with the best that was to be found in all languages—particularly in the lines of philosophy, social science and literature—were to those of us younger men who came to know him, almost appalling. He was learned, and knew that he was learned, above the measure even for learned men. Yet withal he was modest, avoiding rather than courting personal fame. Indeed, he might in truth have said, with Thomas Aquinas, that his motto was *amo nescari*.

With all his learning Mr. Davidson was, however, the most human of men, approachable by all, old and young, high and low, learned and ignorant; generous to a degree in his relations with his fellow-men, giving of himself without stint to all who sought his help or counsel whenever he thought he could be of any use to them in helping them to a higher life. An Adirondack farmer, whose place he had bought, once remarked of

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\*The list of Mr. Davidson's published books includes: "The Philosophical System of Antonio Rosmini Serbati," (London, 1882); "The Parthenon Frieze and other Essays," (Boston and New York, 1886); "Scartazzini's Handbook to Dante, with notes and additions," (Boston, 1887); "Prolegomena to Tennyson's In Memoriam," (Boston, 1889); "Aristotle and Ancient Educational Ideals," (New York, 1892); "The Education of the Greek People, and its Influence on Civilization," (New York, 1894); "Rousseau and Education According to Nature," (New York, 1898); "A History of Education," (New York, 1900). He contributed to *Mind*, *The Philosophical Review*, *The International Journal of Ethics*, *The Journal of Speculative Philosophy*, *Educational Review*, *The Forum*, and other periodicals, upwards of eighty articles, in addition to his reviews of books.

him that "his hand was stretched out to meet you farther away than that of any man he ever knew." This was true, literally as well as figuratively. Any one who has had the good fortune to visit him in his Adirondack home, where he conducted a summer school of the Culture Sciences, will ever remember with the glow of a larger human kindliness his reception at Glenmore. It was Mr. Davidson's custom to have the large lecture-hall bell rung to announce the arrival of an expected guest. At that signal he would at once drop all work and hasten down from his den in the birch grove some two hundred feet above the main buildings. I can see him now hurrying down the hill, his right hand stretched out to greet me when still a good fifty yards away, his left waving his Tam o'Shanter as he shouts his cheery welcome. The warm handshake that followed, the sincere welcome beaming from every feature of his honest, earnest, sunny, intelligent face, made one feel at once that Glenmore was home.

Mr. Davidson was the most intense man I have ever known, intense in his loves and in his hates, both for persons and for doctrines. It was part of his philosophy that morality consisted, as the Greeks had said, in knowing how rightly to love and how rightly to hate, and, he would have added, in having abundant affections to distribute. He firmly believed that the stronger a man's passions were, the greater were his possibilities for virtue and victory, if only they could be rightly directed. Rousseau once wrote, "*Il n'y a que les âmes de feu qui sachent vaincre.*" Mr. Davidson was one of those *âmes de feu*, and he held himself in check by an iron will, and knew how to conquer. No obstacles were for him insurmountable. Finding in the course of some of his investigations in Scholastic Philosophy that he needed a more thorough acquaintance with Arabic than he could acquire from the books, he dropped all other work and went to Cairo to live with the Arabs and learn to speak their tongue. He was then just fifty-four years of age. His last published book was written at a time when he was unable to get more than three consecutive hours of sleep, and when every waking moment was filled with intense pain. Yet his cheerful but profound optimism finds in this

book perhaps its noblest expression, and not once does his personal suffering break through to color a single phrase.

Mr. Davidson was absolutely unsparing of himself and of his friends, downright and straightforward to the point of *intransigence*. He could never quite forgive a man who had once told him a lie, or proved himself ungenerous. He was ever bitter in his denunciation of all forms of pharisaism and of the pride of mere respectability which consisted, he held, solely of negative virtues. Comfort worshipers, sensuous dalliant souls, and all time-servers were his special aversion. But a keen sense of humor, a hearty, jovial nature, and a broad philosophy saved him from the snares of asceticism and left him, with all his vigorous and uncompromising standards, one of the most sociable of men. He always sought out in all men traces of genuine human worth, and he knew how to look behind appearances for the real substance of worth. Consequently his friends were frequently of rough exterior and rougher manner, and he was often found with publicans and sinners. And to his friends he remained ever loyal.

Mr. Davidson was born in Aberdeenshire, in Scotland, October 25, 1840. He received his education in the common schools of his native town, and in the University of Aberdeen, where he acquired, as a second nature, the habit of exact scholarship. What this training meant for him may be inferred from the fact that he used to say, with a full knowledge of the school systems of all lands, that if he had to be educated over again and could choose his schools and masters, he would go through precisely the same training that he had enjoyed. When still a very young man he came to America and, after a brief sojourn in Canada, made his way to Boston. Later he removed to St. Louis where he taught for a time in the public schools, and where he made the acquaintance of the famous little group of St. Louis philosophers, most of whom became his life friends. But Mr. Davidson was a born dissenter who could not and would not fit into any niche. He chafed under all restraint, and was not entirely contented until he finally found his liberty in the life of a free lance, lecturing, writing, teaching private classes, and in this way earning his

modest livelihood while holding himself responsible to himself alone and to his own lofty ideals. Opportunities for University preferment came, but he refused to surrender one jot of his freedom. His mode of life gave him a good six months of every year for leisurely study and frequent opportunities for long visits to Europe, as his studies might call for wisdom that could there best be pursued. Besides, he had a decided distrust of our universities which, he held, were still suffering from mediævalism in methods and habits, from formalism, and from an absence of entire freedom and candor. Moreover, he did not regard the students in the universities to-day as the most promising material to work with, holding that most of them were under the dominion of purely frivolous aims, while most of even the more serious students were animated by no higher motive than the desire to fit themselves to find a more comfortable berth for life. In few, if any, could he find an ardent desire for knowledge for its own sake and for the sake of the light it could throw on the purpose and meaning of life. Only in the last years of his life did he succeed in finding a class of students with whom he could work with entire satisfaction and enthusiasm. When he did find them, with characteristic fervor he gave the best of himself and of his time and energy in working for and with them, asking no other compensation for his services than honest and faithful work on the part of his students. These were the students he found amongst the bread-winners in the East Side of New York. After working with them for two years he wrote: "No one who has ever taught a class of intelligent bread-winners will return willingly to academic teaching. It would be well if all college students were engaged in the practical duties of life."\* Of this work, which at last put his democratic philosophy to the test of practice, we shall have more to say later. Let us first try briefly to state that philosophy.

We cannot better approach the study of this philosophy than by noting in advance the temper of its author's mind as it revealed itself in strong antipathies to some of the

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\*"History of Education," p. 264.

more popular currents of contemporary thought. Hegel, with his denial of the principle of contradiction, he held to be the "prince of confusionists." Historically Hegel's philosophy seemed to him mainly significant as the *reductio ad absurdum* of modern subjectivism, that is to say, of the modern effort to define the forms of thought so exhaustively that nothing is left for the material of thought. At the same time, however, he held that Kant had rendered inestimable service in pointing out that the real meaning of Hume's scepticism was that it had conclusively proved that the mind is essentially active and therefore does not receive any ready-made impressions, but exercises from the first a determining power in the very creation of the world that it knows; that, consequently, no concepts taken either from common sense, or from time-hallowed philosophies, can be accepted without being subjected to the most careful scrutiny. Hegel, however, had too easily concluded, from finding the importance of the part played by the thinking activity, that thought was the last term in the description of reality, and so his philosophy gave us a cobweb world, an arid and unreal system which, logically carried out, could but lead to pantheism, from which disastrous result it was saved in the letter, but not in truth, by Hegel's skill in juggling with such terms as freedom, God, Trinity, and the like, wherein was displayed his ingenuity in pouring new wine into old bottles rather than his zeal in the cause of truth.

The agnostic's position came in for equal condemnation. His whole difficulty comes from the fact that he starts out with a supernaturalistic notion of reality, with a conception, that is, of the absolutely real as, whatever else it may possibly be, never a possible object of experience. The agnostic's conclusion therefore, that reality is unknowable, is a trivial one, or, to put it otherwise, is simply another way of stating his fundamental premise, which premise, in its turn, is a downright prejudice.

Those who gloried in the confusion of philosophies and philosophers, in order that they might point a moral as to the presumption and imbecility of mere reason, whether their Pyrrhonism were proclaimed in the interest of piety, as a prepa-

ration for faith, or in the interest of a supposed freedom that could not brook even the constraint of reason, or in the interest of nature worship like that which found expression in Rousseau in some of his more turgid moods, and frequently in Wordsworth in such passages as :

"One impulse from the vernal wood  
Can teach us more of man,  
Of moral evil and of good  
Than all the sages can,"

—in short, the defenders of all forms of mere sentimentalism and irrationalism were treated continually, and effectually, with the scorn which they deserve. After all, there is no blasphemy worse than that which spends itself in dragging in the mire the noblest faculty with which man is endowed, the faculty which distinguishes him from the animals and enables him to lead a moral life. Not that the doctrine to which one must give adherence is a "cold intellectualism," as it is called. No, the knowledge that is the aim of our rational endeavor is "knowledge armed with moral efficiency, knowledge which commands respect and reverent submission . . . . What turns intellect into a spring of action and freedom is not its power of distinguishing things, but its power of seeing that things have different values, that one thing is better than another, and, therefore, to be preferred to another." This is what is meant by the old saying that not only the thoughts of the head but the thoughts of the heart also must be pure.\*

Perhaps of all the irrationalists, the philistine misologists, the conventionally respectable men who are superior to philosophy, seemed to him the most immoral and pernicious influence of the time,—the men who contemptuously deny "that every man and woman ought to be a philosopher."

"So much does the old habit of authority and convention in matters of intelligence and morals still prevail, so much are men still the slaves of these, that philosophy, which alone can make men free, is still looked upon with suspicion and ill-concealed contempt. One continually hears, "but you can't expect every man to be a philosopher. It takes a long time to learn philosophy, and people generally have other things to attend to.

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\*"Intellectual Piety," pp. 4, 5.

They must sow and reap, buy and sell, eat and drink, and they must have a good time. Philosophy is dull solemn business.' The implication, of course, is that sowing and reaping, buying and selling, and so on, are more important things than philosophy, and this, indeed, is what the world of our time practically believes. The general belief is that the end of life is to acquire material wealth and have a 'good time,' which means to satisfy the natural inclinations, which our education accordingly fosters and pampers. I say this is the result of a failure to recognize that the aim of man's life is man's perfection, and that perfection consists in perfect insight, perfect love and perfect freedom. As soon as men see this clearly they will no longer look down upon philosophy, which is but another name for loving insight, one of the essential elements in human perfection. To despise philosophy is to despise spiritual perfection, for clear knowledge is one of the elements of that perfection. There is no duty more incumbent upon any human being than to know, unless it be the duty of loving with divine love everything known, in proportion to its worth, and sternly refusing to be guided by personal feelings and inclinations. A man or woman who is not a profound thinker, seeing the things of the world in their true ideal proportions, and acting accordingly, is a mere dependent, half-enslaved creature, whatever amount of so-called culture, refinement and kindness he or she may have. Such a person is still a slave to authority and convention, a mere play-actor in life, bound to play a traditional, unreal part, without any of the glorious liberty of the children of God, of them who see the Divine face to face, and, in the light thereof, all things in their true worth."\*

We are dealing, you see, with the philosophy of a man who has banished entirely from his world things-in-themselves and unknowables, and, therefore, materialism, supernaturalism and all other forms of agnosticism, but who at the same time believes that modern idealisms, by singling out one aspect of experience, namely the formal or universal aspect, and regarding it exclusively, have thereby started upon a path that cannot but lead, when logically carried out, to pantheism and the evil type of mysticism.

We can now easily conclude this preliminary fixing of the place of Mr. Davidson's philosophy by the mere enumeration of the objects of his special admiration. These were Æschylus, Socrates, Aristotle, Joachim of Flores, St. Thomas Aquinas, Dante, Kant (with reservations), Rosmini, Goethe (especially the "Faust"), and Tennyson ("In Memoriam"). And of all of these undoubtedly the first place was held by Socrates, the

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\*"Intellectual Piety."



genuinely religious dissenter, the confident believer in human reason and almost the only true individualist; the man who, moreover, justified in his life as well as in his philosophy his claim to our reverence for these things.

One more thing must be borne in mind in our effort to understand this philosophy, and that is the predominance throughout its author's life of the practical interest. He comes to his theoretical speculations because of vital practical needs, as could not but be the case with one of his intense temperament and strict Presbyterian upbringing. But he was a born dissenter, and he firmly believed that the times were religiously and socially out of joint, and that it was his duty, as it was that of every man, to do his best to set them right. With this end in view he took an active interest in the founding of the London Fabian Society. The name of the society is significant. Its determined aim was the gathering and disseminating of information that might lead to the amelioration of social conditions, but it was to be committed to no theory in advance. Later, as the organization drifted toward outright socialism, Mr. Davidson lost interest in it. Socialism seemed to him to be indeed the logical enough outcome of the view of life that places its highest values upon wealth, position and physical comfort; which is, however, a complete inversion of true values. Having its aim centered in these external goods, a reform that looks to them primarily must be mechanical and cramping to the life of the spirit. He saw, in other words, with profound truth that the end to begin with in social reform is always the individual, and, in the individual, his education; that, furthermore, the aim of this education should be to help its possessor to estimate things more nearly at their true worth and to give him the strength to rise above the rule of animality and rightly distribute his affections.

Mr. Davidson also founded the Fellowship of the New Life, first in London, afterward in New York. This society was organized for mutual help in the cultivation of the life of the spirit, for mutual aid in the discovery of real values, and in living accordingly. It was not a church, not even a Unitarian Church, for it had not the

vestige of a creed, unless, indeed, it is having a creed to maintain that there is a higher life for man and that it behooves him earnestly to seek to know what that life is and then to lead it. This organization might be called a sort of Fabian Society of the Spirit. The difficulty with a society of this character is that it is apt to degenerate into sentimentalism, "to mistake" (in the strong language of a recent German writer) "fine feelings for argument and the expanded bosom for the bellows of divinity." Therefore it, too, soon proved unsatisfactory, and both of these practical efforts toward reform convinced Mr. Davidson that the one thing needful above all else in our day is a definite gospel that rests upon, and needs, no authority save the approval of individual reason, a gospel that must therefore also be a philosophy.

Such a philosophy Mr. Davidson believed he had found through his fortunate discovery of Rosmini. It was a doctrine of radical, uncompromising pluralism that was saved from the chaos of atomism by joining with it the belief in the absolute, divine, eternal worth of every member of this community. So intent was he upon saving his doctrine from any swamping monism that he insisted upon calling his view *apeirotheism*. Certainly there was no room in his philosophy for a God who works by special providence, or distributes rewards and punishments. "The God of the future," he writes, "the just God, gives to each one precisely what with his own efforts he has righteously won, neither more or less. The man who asks for more is a miserable dependant, sycophant and beggar; the man who is content with less is a fool."\*

The method whereby it was sought to establish this philosophy was the epistemological method. Every one who has studied the course of philosophy at all knows that always after the zeal of the first efforts has led to the facile construction of some system or other a rival view inevitably looms up, that seems to have quite as strong a claim as the first, and yet contradicts it. So the two doctrines consume one another, and a period of doubt and scepticism supervenes. From the moment this stage is reached one can only make his escape from the intellectual slough of despond by asking, as a prior question

in his philosophy, what *is* knowledge, and how do we come by it? Yet what you find written in the history of philosophy is also always this: that, when this question is raised, forthwith it is assumed that two antithetical terms are somehow immediately given, and that knowledge consists in bringing these two terms to unite; but as these terms are always taken to be mutually exclusive, philosophies are hard put to it to effect the union. These antithetical terms are, to take the most common instances, the fixed and the fleeting, subject and object, the universal and the particular, appearance and reality, reason and sense, mind and matter, sensitive tablet and external things. And the puzzle of knowledge is to get one of each of these pairs at its opposite. It is generally assumed that if only, by some sort of philosophical alchemy, you can transfuse these incompatibles, or forcibly collocate them, your problem of knowledge is solved. If this cannot be done, then one of the opposites is usually discarded in favor of the other. Now it is obvious that we should not begin with these terms, as if they themselves required no further scrutiny. We must begin by analyzing the act of cognition, and the act of perception, as they really appear in immediate experience, and not as they are interpreted by a ready-made theory, such as is implied in the very statement of the problem as it usually appears. Bacon said that our duty as scientists is to interpret nature and not to anticipate it. As philosophers, our task is to interpret experience and not to anticipate it.

The result that is reached by this method I can best give in Mr. Davidson's own words:

"Instead of saying as has been said heretofore, that the world starts with an inscrutable God, inscrutable atoms, or an inscrutable ether, not one of which can identify itself with our intelligence and so be known, our theory says that the world consists of a multitude of sentient individuals or atoms, whose unity is their sentience, and that these are essentially related to each other through desire. Sentience and desire are two aspects of the same fundamental fact. There is no desire without sentience and no sentience without desire. . . . Matter itself, so far as we could know it, would have to be groups of feelings. . . . The only possible completely intelligible and moral world is a world composed of essentially distinct feelings or sentiences . . . . interrelated through action and passion, two forms of feeling, and yet fundamentally impenetrable to each other.

And, indeed, this is the world that we really find ourselves in, or in ourselves. I can feel your action and you can feel mine; but my feeling, or the feeling which I am is utterly opaque to you, and the feeling which you are to me. I can learn that you have a toothache and even understand it, if I have had one as a modification of my own feeling; but I can never feel the toothache which you feel. As sentient and desiring subjects we are absolutely impenetrable to each other, and, in so far, we are hypotheses to each other. That is the price we pay for being realities, eternal realities, if you will. If you could feel my feelings we should be merged into one and both cease to be individuals. This does not lead to Agnosticism, as might seem at first sight. There is nothing in you that I may not know if you choose to be communicative; but your feelings I can never feel. So far, happily we must be eternally agnostics. That is the price we pay for being anything at all.”\*

Or, consider, again, this statement:

“Each has only to ask himself, What do I know myself to be? And if he answers honestly he will, I think, say: ‘I am a feeling or sensibility, modified in innumerable ways, by influences which I do not originate. These modifications, when grouped, are what I call the world, or *my* world, for I know no other. I am the sentient unity of a sensible world.”†

This is, of course, a mere summary of the results reached in Mr. Davidson’s philosophy,† and it will at once suggest many doubts and queries. I believe that we should find that these

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\*“American Democracy as a Religion,” in *INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF ETHICS*. Vol. X, p. 30 ff.

†“Education as World Building,” in *Educational Review* for Nov, 1900. p. 327.

Amongst Mr. Davidson’s published writings the one that throws most light upon his general philosophical standpoint is the article on “Perception,” which he contributed to *Mind*, Vol. VII. (1884), at the time when the influence of Rosmini was particularly strong. The fact in experience which he then wished to emphasize was Being. This he thought Hegel, and indeed, all idealists, spirited away by regarding it exclusively in its aspect as definitely universalized in thought. Thus Being vanished into a category; the *quod cognoscimus* was taken up into, and consumed by, the *quo cognoscimus*. In the latest formulations of his philosophy we find that the term “being” has given place to the phrases, “fundamental feelings,” or “substantial feelings,” together with “desire”—the active aspect of feeling. The transition is easily understood. Being that is not even conceivably exhaustible in thinking, if it is not to vanish, in the opposite direction, into a mere unknowable substratum of experience, must find its meaning in experience, and, when we turn into experience, that which is there immediately given as real is just feeling. It should be added that Rosmini almost suggests this transition. The phrase “fundamental feeling” is his.

doubts have not all been sufficiently considered. The full elaboration of this philosophy, in other words, had unhappily not been completed.

Just as Schopenhauer had tried to escape from the consequences of the omnivorous thought principle, upon which the German philosophy that preceded him had rested, by emphasis upon the will, so Mr. Davidson tries to avoid the pantheism of both of these philosophies by making feeling the fundamental fact in experience. Now, this is just where one naturally seeks to lay the emphasis if one is intensely interested in developing a pluralistic philosophy, for it is as feeling that we are directly shut within our own worlds, and shut out from the worlds of other individuals.

This doctrine, moreover, in two ways seeks to ward off the charge of mere subjectivism: (1) In accepting as a fact the action, through desire, of one individual upon another,—an obvious *fact*, but one which most idealisms have difficulty in adjusting to their systems. (2) In making room for a moral ideal. Life and education consist in world-building; in ordering, classifying, grouping our sensations, and hypostasizing them. “But there are worlds and worlds. Since the human being is a sentient desire, which from its very nature demands the highest and most varied satisfaction, the aim of education must be to enable him to construct a world capable of yielding such satisfaction. . . . The extent and richness of the world which any living being constructs depends upon two things: its capacity for manifold experience, and its power of arranging or classifying that experience. The former of these, again, depends upon the number and acuteness of the senses; the latter upon the force of the primitive desire for satisfaction. . . . Ethical life depends upon the completeness and harmony of the world evolved in the individual consciousness.” A moral world would be one in which objects were stamped with their value for the satisfaction of desire, and loved and made motives for the will, in accordance with that stamping. The spring of all wrong doing is, as Æschylus said, false-coinage, *παρομοία*. Some worlds are small but well ordered, the world of the ordinary respectable citizen; some small and ill-ordered,

the world of the parasite and ordinary criminal; some large and well-ordered, the world of the saints, heroes, benefactors of humanity, thinkers, statesmen and reformers, the introducers of ideals; some large but ill-ordered, the world of the Macbeths and Napoleons, the great reprobates and criminals. Some worlds again are rigidly bounded, the worlds of the narrow conservative, "old foggy," or of the fanatic of one idea; others are continually expanding, the worlds of the liberal and the reformer. The pessimist is simply the man who continually fails to organize a world satisfactory to his desires, and who proclaims himself a failure in world-building.\*

The pluralistic philosophy which Mr. Davidson reached, a brief and summary statement of which we now have before us, he held to be the genuine philosophy of democracy, since it recognizes the individual as the source of all authority, and at the same time regards every individual as animated by a desire that is in truth nothing less than a desire for the highest, and as capable therefore of realizing for himself the highest satisfaction. Two things follow as a necessary consequence from this teaching. (1) It should be possible for every individual to share in the inheritance of the ages, in all, that is, that the ages have produced that is of real soul-satisfying worth, in the highest culture of the time. And fortunately there is enough of these blessings to go around, for these are just the things that, as Mr. Davidson used to say, can be multiplied indefinitely without being divided. (2) It should be the duty and privilege of every more favored individual to labor without ceasing in order that he may help his fellow-men into their inheritance. And such help consists not merely in giving them knowledge and culture, and helping them rightly to distribute values, but also in helping to make them more efficient and competent craftsmen. The latter work can only be undertaken by such institutions as the famous London Polytechnic, but every citizen can do his share in the former.

Mr. Davidson accordingly spent his life in the effort to

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\*"Education as World Building," *Educational Review* for November, 1900.

uplift men by supplying a sound, aimful education. To him the world seemed "sadly unspiritual, sadly narrow, ignorant and frivolous. It has lost the light of reason, and is running after vain shadows." Animated throughout his career by a profound missionary zeal, he early determined to do his share in making the world spiritual again. His efforts, alone and unaided, to accomplish this work were very far from satisfying him, and he went through life hunting for kindred souls, dreaming of the establishment of a sort of Pythagorean brotherhood of the spirit, a community where the actual daily life should be a practical object lesson in the right adjustment of social relations. Indeed, the dominant aim of his life might be summed up in the words in which he described the purposes of one of the organizations which he effected with that end in view: 1. "To bring men together who really and in all earnestness desire to comprehend the world, in order that they may better it, and who are ready to consider all questions without prejudice or respect for current and conventional opinions or authority." 2. "To disseminate in every way, by teaching, lecturing, printing, and *especially by living*, intellectual and moral truth, and to put a period to living by mere conventionality and uncomprehended dogma."

None of these undertakings proved entirely satisfactory, and it was only toward the end of his life that, almost by chance, he stumbled upon the opportunity to carry on this work in a way that seemed to him altogether encouraging.

In the fall of 1898 he lectured in the Educational Alliance to a large audience composed mainly of hard-driven laboring men and women from the East Side of New York upon "Problems which the Nineteenth Century hands on to the Twentieth." At the conclusion of the lecture one man arose and objected that it was all very well to talk about profiting by the culture of ages, but, as for them, they were ground in the dust and had no opportunity. With characteristic impetuosity Mr. Davidson exclaimed that it was not so, that they had all the opportunity they deserved; that, if they only wanted these things badly enough, they could get them. "For instance," said he, "if you will form a class, and fall to

work in dead earnest, I will come down and meet you once a week and teach you." A large number signified their eagerness to undertake the work, a class was formed which soon numbered several hundred men and women, and Mr. Davidson, always better than his word, went down twice a week, meeting, on his second visit, a class of those who were particularly interested in philosophy.

At the first meetings of the class doctrinaire socialists, steeped in the theories of Marx, were very much in evidence; but, under the Socratic cross-questioning of their teacher, they were soon put into confusion and, by common consent, it was agreed that the discussion of these most difficult and complex social questions should be deferred for some years, until they had acquired a broader knowledge of the history and meaning of civilization and of the culture which it had produced.

What he accomplished with these men and women, and how he accomplished it, forms an interesting and significant chapter in the history of modern efforts for the uplifting of mankind, but a detailed account of this work would carry us beyond the limits of this paper and must be postponed to another occasion.

In this band of intensely eager and earnest minds Mr. Davidson felt that at last he had found his family, and the work with them inspired him with a new hope for the future, a hope which he has voiced in the concluding chapter of his last published work:

"If the teachers of the nation, with a due sense of their power and importance, would, without hope or desire for material reward, form themselves into an association for the higher education of the bread-winners, as the teachers of France are doing, and each devote a couple of evenings a week to the work, they would soon elevate the culture of the whole people, and remove the worst dangers that threaten society. Poverty, vice and degradation would, in large measure, disappear, giving place to well-being, virtue and nobility. There is no more patriotic work than this; for it is not amid the thunder of the battle-field, where men slay their fellowmen, that the noblest civic laurels are won, but in the quiet school room, where devoted patriots, men and women, combine to slay misery, meanness and corruption." (Hist. Ed. 276).

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